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THE DUTY OF COMMUNISTS

We, as Communists, and as uncompromising followers of Marx and Lenin, maintain that it is the duty of the Communists to be the most constructive fighters inside the trade unions, which we consider the most all-inclusive, the most elemental organization of the working people, taking in people of all colors and all creeds and all political opinions.

We say that Communists should, and those Communists who do not, we hope will correct themselves, have the following views so far as the trade union movement is concerned. Even the weakest union, a union with the most conservative leadership—even a union which is not satisfactory to us, is better than no union. (Applause) And the job of the Communist in the unions is not through name-calling, not through mud slinging, but through exemplary, constructive, militant conduct to show the workers that the road to complete victory as defended by the Communists is the road which they should follow.

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NO STIFLING OF DIFFERENCES

We do not believe that differences in the unions should be stifled. We say that that organization which is unable to stand having differences is an organization which belongs in the cemetery, and that trade unions do not belong in the cemetery. We believe that the differences we have in the unions are differences that can and should and must be settled through democratic means—and when I say democratic, I do not spell it with a capital “D”—through friendly, brotherly discussion. No expulsions, no mud-slinging, no black jacks can offer a solution and a settlement of differences. It is only through the test of life, it is only through the frankest and freest discussions, that we are able to arrive at the most constructive policy.

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NRA AND LABOR

You, fellow-workers and comrades, know very well that today you can not speak of the problems of the trade union movement without considering the NRA. Let me underscore at the very outset of my remarks that we are great disbelievers in the NRA. We take the sharpest issue with those sections of the labor movement who think that the NRA is worth a half penny for them. The NRA, at its best, is a counterfeit. We are of the opinion that there should have been no illusions about the NRA. We know the old hag; we can see beneath her powdered wig. We know the old hag with her contagious diseases for the labor movement. We did not have to wait for General Johnson's speech, a strike-breaking speech, at the last American Federation of Labor convention, a speech which challenges the right to strike; and your President and you fellow delegates will bear me out that once you take away the right to strike from the trade unions you have taken away from them the right and the possibility to live.

Look at the textile workers. General Johnson gave them a set of professors to study their conditions. It is a sort of splinter from the brain trust. What the workers want is not statistics; they want food and jobs.

Look at the automobile industry. I have just come from Detroit, where the New Dealers from Washington are preparing for a big revolt of the automobile workers, and there, my friends and fellow workers, they have appointed as Police Commissioner of the city Colonel Pickert. Who is Colonel Pickert? He was head of the 182nd Division of the National Guard of the State of Michigan, Commander-in-Chief of the troops which shot down the workers in Calumet and Hecla.

Why did they put him up there? For law and order, for peace and plenty—for the bosses!

Coal miners' wages are being cut.

You workers know very well that the NRA is of no earthly use to us unless you can line it up against the wall and get something out of it. And the first thing there, is organization—bigger organization, more effective organization.

And let me say this to you. Remember that Washington, D. C., is the headquarters of the chisellers. Looking for chisellers should be like charity; it should begin at home. D. C.—District of Chisellers would be a proper term. It is they who always speak to you against philosophy and selfish interests. What is all this? When they tell you about philosophy they are hiding something from you. To the capitalist class and its spokesmen, no matter where or who they are, when they say, “Don't be selfish,” you must answer: An examination of selfishness should also begin at home.

The working people are not suffering from selfishness. They are suffering from lack of adequate organization and consciousness of their ability to protect themselves against capitalism. You can not have a partnership with the NRA. To be a part of the NRA machinery means to sacrifice certain opportunities for the effectiveness of your best weapon, the right to strike.

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MENACE OF FASCISM

Let me sound a warning. Through the NRA and through its validating company unionism the capitalist class is preparing the road to Fascism in a more dangerous, in a more effective, in a more destructive way than through any other steps being taken.

And, at this point, a word about Fascism. I have had the opportunity to see Fascism grow and develop in Germany. I have had the opportunity, unfortunately, to have seen it come to victory because

the working class was not aware of the growing menace of it. Fascism may appear distant from us today, but, my friends and fellow-workers and comrades, Fascism is as distant from us as we allow it to be. We must learn from the mistakes of our German and Italian brothers.

The powerful trade union movement of Germany has today become an underground shell. The powerful political movement of Germany has today become an underground skeleton with the first signs of revival. We in this country must be on guard primarily against the menace of company unionism as the most dangerous source of Fascism. When we speak of Fascism, let us not forget that it isn't only Hitler, Mussolini or Pilsudsky. Who knows whether tomorrow it won't be Doumergue or MacDonald in France or in England?

Permit me, in behalf of the underground German trade unions with whom we are in contact and in behalf of the underground political organizations of Germany today, to present to you, through your President, the first underground trade union paper, actual size, now being circulated in Germany, "Der Metalarbeiter" (The Metal Worker). This is the condition into which the once most powerful union in the world has been forced. That is the best they can do today. I say to you, comrades and fellow-workers, let us learn from our experiences over there so that here we are not driven into such a condition. Here are two other papers from the underground movement, one the "Arbeiterstimme" (Voice of Labor), actual size, and another "Einheit," the most popular word in Germany today, "Unity"—unity of Communists, Socialists, Trade Unionists and Catholic workers against Hitler. (Applause).

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DICTATORSHIP BY WHOM?

Much has been said of the fear of dictatorship. I say we ought to drop this bugaboo of dictatorship. When your union dictates a contract to a boss or an association, is it good or bad? It is good. When the bosses dictate to the union, that is bad. Dictatorship is not an abstraction. I think you can not commit a bigger crime against the labor movement than when you lump together Communism—the working class dictatorship of Russia—with Fascism, the trust dictatorship of Germany. There is all the difference in the world between the two, essentially the difference in the class relationship, as between your dictating to the bosses as against the bosses dictating the terms to you. We should not confuse these situations.

Let me say we stand proud to show you Russia, once the land of the darkest Tsardom; Russia today is what it is because the working class has taken power. It is the most advanced, the most rapidly developing cultural and industrial country, a country which has already torn one-sixth of the world out of the hands of the exploiting class and put it into the hands of the toiling masses, and we say to you with all the energy at our command that as the victories of Russia are not only Russian victories, so the defeats of Russia are not only Russian defeats, but are our own.

We have made mistakes there. We are not perfect. We will make mistakes, but with all the mistakes and with all the shortcomings we may have there, let me assure you that Socialist Soviet Russia is the greatest inspiration in the history of the world. It is the breaking of a new dawn, of a new day, for the working people all over the world.

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ILGWU SHOULD BE IN VANGUARD

I can not conclude my remarks to you without telling you that your union, in our opinion, must not only take steps to hold the gains it has made, but must take steps to extend the gains it has won. We pledge to you in behalf of the Communist Party (Opposition) that in any struggle you are in, in any fight against the bosses, you will find our members and our followers first on the picket lines, in the front line of the fights. (Applause)

We ask nothing in return, because your victory is the victory of our class, and therefore, is our victory. We fight shoulder to shoulder with you for decent, bearable, tolerable conditions in this hell of a system known as capitalism. We say a little more than that. Your union, in our opinion, should undertake to become the beacon of the American trade union movement. Your union should undertake to set an example of leadership and inspiration to the other trade unions. We may think and we do think that your union is not radical enough, but heaven bless you when you see the other unions. (Applause). In comparison with some of the other unions, let us say the photo-engravers, you have actually made a "revolution." Of course, I say we are not satisfied. We want your revolution to go more to the left. We are very frank with you about it and we are going to work for it, within the trade union movement on a constructive basis.

When I say I think that your union should become the torch bearer of the labor movement, I have the following in mind: You should fight for social insurance. I don't want to butt into your business, but I think trade unions have no business in the insurance business. (Laughter) I think it is the duty of the working people to fight for old age, unemployment and sickness insurance as they have never fought before. (Applause) If the capitalist class can't pay for it, it is not our worry; it is their headache. Who tells them to rule? Let them get out and if they want or need any help to get out, we can all give it to them. (Laughter and applause)

We say that your union, on the basis of the reso-

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lution adopted yesterday on the reconstruction of the American Federation of Labor on an industrial union basis should get down to business to line up other unions. You can not win the race against the capitalists in airplanes with ox cart organizations of craft unions. It is an unfair race no matter what "philosophical or selfish interests" you may be cautioned against. You all know what I mean and what I am driving at.

I think your union is better equipped to do it than any other because you are the most American union in the country. That may surprise you, I mean you are a mirror of America much more than other organizations. You have Negroes, you have Italians, you have Jews, you have Spaniards, you have a labor league of nations. A little more. Your union is a laboratory of working class opinion. In your union you have sound Communists and unsound Communists, sleepy socialists and wide awake Socialists, (laughter) Democrats and Republicans, and so on.

Who is going to do it except an organization of this sort? I think that what you should do is consider these questions that I have raised not in the light of an experiment, but in the light of an experience for the entire labor movement.

Now a word in closing to the new delegates and the members whom you represent. The biggest thing for the working class of this country is the influx of new millions of workers into the unions. It is your union and it will be your union as you become active in building the union. That is our message to you and we encourage you and want you to do it.

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POWER MUST BE USED

Power and responsibility!

What is the good of having power if you don't exercise it? Power without exercise is perversion. When you have power don't be afraid to use it. The German labor movement had power and was afraid to use it. Where is it now? You must know that when you get power, as you are getting it now, you

do have a certain responsibility to the working class. That responsibility is to fight for it.

We ask you to help us, and we will help you, work together with you, not only for the improvement of your every day conditions, but for the elimination of all classes, for the elimination of all exploitation, for the wiping out of the present system of misery and poverty. We ask you to fight together with us. We pledge you to fight with you in your daily struggles so that we can together learn in life the lesson of unity for a common struggle for the destruction of the present insane, miserable, war-producing, Fascist-breeding system of capitalism. (Applause).

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PRESIDENT DUBINSKY: We were glad to receive a word of criticism from one who does not try to shove his opinion down our throats. (Applause) We have a right to disagree with him just the same as I have a right to believe in the NRA, and Lovestone has a right to disbelieve in the NRA. Just the same as I have a right to believe that the NRA has done considerable for the workers of this country, particularly in the textile industry, where they have established the forty hour week for the first time by law, where they formerly worked 55 and 60 hours, Lovestone has a right to believe that nothing has been done. We have a right to come with our opinions, express them, convince, educate, win supporters. This is the procedure of the labor movement, and anyone that expresses himself in that manner is welcome within our ranks and is welcome to our platform. (Applause).

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DELEGATE ROSENTHAL: I think that was a marvelous speech delivered by Comrade Lovestone who has helped greatly to rebuild our union and make it stronger. I move that the speech should be embodied in our minutes.

The motion was voted upon and carried. (Applause)

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PRESIDENT DUBINSKY: And even on this we have a right to disagree.